

Rendez-vous !

Taxi Tram

Saturday 25 January 2014

A journey between Le Plateau – FRAC Ile-de-France (Paris) and Crédac.

Infos & bookings at Tram :
01 53 34 64 43 / taxitram@tram-idf.fr

Fanette Mellier, *Empreintes*

Thursday 13 February 2014
from 7 to 8:30 PM

On the occasion of the 9th Science & Techniques Book Fair of Ivry, Fanette Mellier, graphic designer, will dialog with Lucile Théveneau, exhibitions manager at the Imprimerie nationale, where she is currently a resident, about her book *Empreintes* (in collaboration with James Noël, poet and Emilie Lamy, photographer).

Free admission *

Studio-Snacks

Wednesday 19 February
& Sunday 23 March 2014
from 3:30 to 5 PM

During these “workshop-afternoon treats,” children from 6 to 12 years old become docents at the art center and lead their families on a tour through the show. Young and old are then invited to enjoy a workshop inspired by the work of Friedrich Kunath, then followed by an afternoon snack.

Free admission *

Art-Tea

Thursday 20 February 2014
at 3:30 PM

A guided visit of Friedrich Kunath’s exhibition with Crédac’s docents followed by teatime. In collaboration with the Retirees Service of the city of Ivry-sur-Seine.

Participation: 3€ *

Crédacollation

Thursday 6 March 2014
from noon to 2 PM

A convivial moment for sharing thoughts and reactions with others, this guided tour with Crédac’s team will be followed by lunch at the art center.

Participation: 6€ / Members: 3€ *

Thomas Clerc, performance

Saturday 8 March 2014 at 4 PM

Free admission *

* Bookings required !

01 49 60 25 06 / contact@credac.fr

MARD!

Conferences cycle

For this 7th season, Crédac and the library of Ivry invite Elvan Zabunyan, Art historian specialist of American art since the 1960s and whose work focuses in particular on the relationship between art history and postcolonial theories.

An other History

Season 2013-2014

Especially conceived by Elvan Zabunyan, this cycle initiates a survey of the unrecognized links between the history of contemporary art, the colonial context and the legacy of slavery in the United States and in the Caribbean. Through five case studies, from 1848 to the present, she will attempt to expand the approach of both art and history through the cultural and political issues that these figures refer to.

Carrie Mae Weems, the visual spaces of commitment

Conference by Elvan Zabunyan

Tuesday 4 February 2014 at 7 P.M.

Through photography, the artist builds a history of the Black Diaspora.

Isaac Julien, Creole ghost(s)

Conference by Elvan Zabunyan

Tuesday 1st April 2014 at 7 P.M.

From Frantz Fanon to Sainte-Lucie and vice versa.

»-» The *Mard!* talks are held at the Multimedia Center of Ivry – The Antonin Artaud Auditorium, 152, avenue Danielle Casanova – Ivry-sur-Seine Metro: the 7 line, Mairie d’Ivry (50 m from the station)

Talks run 90 min. Free admission.

For the *Mard!* evening events, exhibitions at Crédac remain open until 6:45 PM.

Centre d’art contemporain d’Ivry – le Crédac

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Open every day (except Mondays)
from 2 to 6 PM, weekends from 2 to 7 PM
— free admission

Metro: line 7, Mairie d’Ivry / RER C: Ivry-sur-Seine

Member of Tram and DCA networks,
Crédac enjoys the generous support of the City of Ivry-sur-Seine, the Regional Direction of Cultural Affairs of Île-de-France (the Ministry of Culture and Communications), the General Council of Val-de-Marne and the Regional Council of Île-de-France.



This show enjoys the generous support of IFA, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart; BQ, Berlin; and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles.

ifa Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen

LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART

Gum

Friedrich Kunath

— *A Plan to Follow Summer Around the World*

From 17 January
to 23 March 2014

Friedrich Kunath’s first solo show in France, *A Plan to Follow Summer Around the World* features both recent and new works in an expansive project highlighting the range of his artistic vocabulary and the variety of the media he has worked in, from sculpture, installation and video art, to painting, photography and beyond.

The three exhibition galleries, which the artist has poetically dubbed *Travel Room*, *Animal Zoo Room* and *Sunset Room*, offer an understanding introduction to Friedrich Kunath’s output, an exploration that goes to the heart of the artist’s major themes and concerns.

The exhibition is dominated by a number of recurrent motifs reminiscent of travel. Some of these bring with them a wealth of connotations, like sunsets, suitcases and sail boats, sketching out the main lines of a narrative but without forming an articulated story. Indeed, the title of the show itself suggests a mood more than a real intention. Friedrich Kunath’s project is about grasping the melancholy of the traveler in its various aspects as a projection, an expectation and a looking back, which are peculiar to all transitive states.

Room 1 *Travel Room*

At the center of the room, an installation seems to evoke the paradox of modern travel, which falls between the need for mobility and the awkwardness of all that one has to bring along. Together with

the suitcases there is a modest pile of small knickknacks of all kinds, evincing Kunath’s affection for certain typologies of objects like vintage decorations, album covers, postcards, fabrics, tennis accessories and luxury icons that have been reappropriated by pop culture (loafers, Louis Vuitton bags, French perfumes).

Often the same objects are also reused in the artist’s films or are photographed, evincing a fluid movement from one medium to another. The vintage objects suggest sentimental memories and vacations, something that prompts a strong feeling of nostalgia before these tragicomic still-lives, which are by turns grotesque and touching. Friedrich Kunath’s paintings (*A Plan to Follow Summer Around the World*, 2013) partake of some of the same methods of collage and combination through the overlaying of motifs that come in highly contrasting styles and a wide range of genres, including seventeenth-century engraving, satirical comics, vintage advertising, etc. These are superimposed over fluid color-filled backgrounds.

Everywhere in this gallery, shoes in a great range of styles as well (loafer, sneaker, ankle boot, flip-flop, ski boot, polished dress shoe and gilded cowboy boot) symbolize an equally broad range of uses connected with leisure activities; their accumulation here, infused with a vague pathos, makes them memento moris of our attachment to objects.

The loafers that are part of *Honey I’m Home (Egg)* (2012) are a type of shoe that is simultaneously very popular and highly connotated,

suggesting a certain bourgeoisie and its leisure activities, such as sailing and tennis. Designed in the late nineteenth century in Britain and later exported to the United States via Scandinavia, loafers took on Amerindian influences along the way to become the shoe worn by both students and businessmen today. This trans-Atlantic identity and its ability to condense high and low culture make this shoe an iconic object for Friedrich Kunath’s imagination. Springing directly from the film *You Go Your Way and I’ll Go Crazy* (2012), which is being screened in Gallery 3, this huge version is filled with fine sand and a few cigarette butts, conjuring up a return from some vacation trip away, both comfortable and painful... In a play of associations worthy of the surrealists, the fried egg reinforces the narrative metaphor of the return home, which the clichéd title makes plain. By turns too small and too large, this pair of shoes represents for the artist the temptation or illusion of comfort and the half-tragic half-ludicrous position of man in search of his place in the world.

Born in East Germany and based in Los Angeles since 2007, Friedrich Kunath often evokes in his works this dual, diametrically opposed identity of the West. While several pieces in the show point to a progressive disappearance (*For Everyman*, 2006, *Dynamic Stabilization*, 2013), others sketch out a multifaceted portrait of the man and the artist in the instability of moving from one place to another, the in-between state. The video *About soufflé* (2004) seems to quote a sequence from Buster Keaton’s film *Sherlock*

Junior (1924) in which the main character finds himself thrust into a different world with each new shot. Friedrich Kunath borrows that series of settings which one and the same character walks through. It is an old special effect, both comic and surreal, although here the gag gives way to an anxiety that springs from the repetition of the gesture as in an endless loop.

In another video, **Untitled** (2009), a snowman bearing a suitcase is seen marching across the desert, without any clue as to the reason or the aim of his wandering. The lunar landscape recalls the final scene of Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970), but in this case no explosion interrupts the monotony of the action; the figure seems condemned to a tiresome, painful walk going nowhere. Of course the contrast between the snow and the desert is as striking as the paradox of a fairytale character (suggesting a clown or Pierrot) who seems to be about to miss his flight. As is often the case in Friedrich Kunath's work, the character is in a situation where some hindrance or obstacle is present and he is thwarted from doing what he wants to do. The film perfectly suggests the exhibition's recurring theme, i.e., the idea of the journey, the trip, rather than the reality of traveling. The dissatisfaction of a fantasy when compared with reality, in other words.

Room 2

Animal Zoo Room

The second gallery space introduces the “humanized” animal or the “animalized” human, two points of view likely to elicit empathy from visitors to the show. Thus, the two sea otters that are part of the floor sculpture **What a Difference It Makes When It Doesn't Make Any Difference Anymore** (2013) are frozen in the position of floating on their backs. Their human feet bring to mind the pair of shoes sporting human toes

in René Magritte's The Red Model (1935). As Friedrich Kunath sees it, humans' sympathy for animals is born of a simple anthropomorphic projection. That is, animals evoke and fill our need to be close to other human beings. And so it is with sea otters, which hold hands while sleeping purely through an instinct for survival, to avoid drifting and getting lost. Here, transformed into bookends, they are holding up a record album, the song *People* by Barbra Streisand (1964). The singer and actor, known for her skill in moving audiences, is photographed here from behind on a beach and facing the setting sun. Kunath's work maintains a palpable, immediate emotion with the viewer, comparable to the feeling provoked by music.

This empathetic mechanism for the cuteness in animals can be seen as well in the piece titled **Broke Bats** (2008), in which three ceramic bats hanging from the ceiling are made to look like puppets, slightly flattened rag dolls. The small objects that seem to have fallen to the floor, however, look more like trouser pockets turned inside out, which the “broke” of the title (rather than “broken”) appears to confirm.

In **The End of the World Is Bigger Than Love** (2012), a sea lion right in the middle of some circus act is balancing on its nose a polyhedron whose shape is borrowed from the same figure in Albrecht Dürer's famous engraving *Melencolia I* (1514). The piece immediately creates a parallel—a collage—between the apparent frivolity of the theme and the ambiguity and esotericism of the notion of melancholy. During the Renaissance deemed a manifestation of genius to which it throws open the doors of the imagination, melancholy is a double-edged feeling, falling between depression and enthusiasm, and emblematic of Romanticism. The title, which is

borrowed from a Jens Lekman song, conjures up that state of melancholy in the face of death experienced as a fatality.

Friedrich Kunath's penchant for the shifting state of feelings is on display as well in the film **Is There Life Before Death** (2012), which follows the artist as he slowly walks along concrete spillways, the kind of landscape one easily sees in Los Angeles. Dressed elegantly, Friedrich Kunath is decked out with a fake parrot, symbol of wealth and eloquence in Christian culture, and highly popular on the beaches of California. He is holding in one hand a bunch of grapes, attribute of Dionysus of course and symbol of life, and in the other a knotted rope, a sign of despair. While juxtaposing lots of contradictory images to generate tensions among them, Friedrich Kunath shifts us between black-and-white and color, like in Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The title of Friedrich Kunath's film comes from a 1970s tune (the period is largely examined in the artist's body of work). “There Is Life Before Death” is a song by the East-German poet Wolf Biermann, but unlike his affirmative title, Kunath introduces a nuance that gives voice to the questioning and doubt that characterize his generation.

Room 3

Sunset Room

This room features a home interior, the walls of which are filled with paintings and photographs. The sunset, symbol of the languor that takes hold of the traveler and cliché par excellence, typifies the cheap posters that have decorated generations of teenagers' rooms; it is also a paradigm of the sham aesthetic of advertising that is out to sell a dream. While repeatedly surfacing in his paintings (*Circulus Vitiosus*, 2013; *5:59*, 2013; *Mission: No Solution*, 2013), it also figures in the exhibi-

tion thanks to a number of objects. The small smiling orange, the tennis ball, the peach in **Untitled (Peach Sunset)** (2011), or the album cover of Neil Diamond's *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* (1973), which serves as the background for the mythic, now discontinued, Lanvin perfume *My Sin*, in the piece **Eau My Sin (Livingstone Seagull)** (2011).

The large painting produced for this show (**RE: VUILLARD (LAX)**, 2013) is of a scope and scale comparable to the Ivry landscape, with which it enters into a dialogue. It is a remake of the large panel painted by Edouard Vuillard called *First Fruits* (1899), which is hanging in the Norton Simon Museum of Pasadena, not far from Kunath's studio. Originally painted for a Parisian interior, Vuillard's picture, all broad patches of muted colors and motifs suggesting tapestries, is typical of bourgeois tastes in the late nineteenth century for the artificial, synthetic, decorative compositions of the Nabis. Seen as a curious “back window on Europe” by the artist, the piece borrows Vuillard's composition while adding a sumptuous Californian sky at sunset that sports the mantra “RE:LAX” along with other anachronistic details.

In this gallery Friedrich Kunath also references Joris Karl Huysmans' *Against Nature* (1884), considered a Symbolist masterpiece. It was also highly influential for the Surrealist movement. The book describes the state of melancholy and refined decadence of the hero, Des Esseintes, who decides he will lead the life of a recluse, shut up within his own walls, living for a world of objects and feelings that he judges capable of replacing any commerce with the real world. The journey is aimless, the idea of the journey prevailing over its very reality. To his Californian motifs and pop-culture objects Friedrich Kunath thus adds references to Symbolist art from the French nineteenth century, which create tensions in the exhibi-

tion between the artist's past and present, the weight of European “old culture” and the apparent frivolity of the American way of life, acceptance and renunciation. As he points out, his new environment has also had an influence on his work, “I suppose that the colors are brighter and the subjects darker. Sun and Noir.”

Richly textured in iconographic, esthetic and narrative terms, the film **You Go Your Way And I'll Go Crazy** (2012) features a man no longer young but still quite handsome and athletic, the artist's romantic alter ego, whom we see by turns playing tennis against a painting, naked and facing the setting sun (recalling the figures in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, an icon of German Romanticism), completely clothed and thrashing around in a pool, pleading to a telephone whose line is cut, among scattered floating plastic fruit, and pressing a cactus to his breast...

The metaphor of the uprooted man also appears in **Lonesome Cosmic Doppelganger** (2013). Reflecting the artist's abundant pictorial output, the painting features a leisurely reworking of the motif of the lone wayfarer. Finally, the two outside matches (**Gary Dove** and **Geoffrey Firmin**, 2012) sport human faces, one smiling, the other scowling. The one whose head is already burnt is called Geoffrey Firmin, the sad unfortunate hero of Malcom Lowry's novel *Under the Volcano* (1947). The book recounts the alcohol-fueled descent into hell of this spurned lover in a barren apocalyptic landscape at the foot of a volcano.

Biography

Born in 1974 in Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt, former DDR), Friedrich Kunath lives and works in Los Angeles. He studied at the Braunschweig School of Fine Arts under Walter Dahn.

He has had solo shows at the Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn (2001); the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, and the 55th Carnegie International, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2008); the Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover (2009); the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2010); Schinkel Pavilion, Berlin (2011); the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and Modern Art Oxford (2013).

Friedrich Kunath is represented by Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; BQ, Berlin; the Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; and White Cube, London.